



Biologism equals speciesism

Edition Farangis: Animal Autonomy E-Reader 4

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Biologism equals speciesism

In our nonhuman-inclusive approach the definition of *biologism* would be, e.g.

> *the interpretation of animal life from a strictly biological point of view; the use of biological explanations in the analysis of social situations – in general.*

Social in our definition implies nonhuman animality.



Female-identified human individuals and speciesism, species-derogation, -negation -annihilation or the overlooked problem of “women” and anthropocentric-collectivist speciesism

A.) I set forth following *anchor points*, before I start on the topic:

- We can ask if the interpretations of the characteristics, that are considered to make up the marking dividers within a human-animal hierarchy, are in reality a negation of the autonomous value of otherness [and diverseness] in nonhuman animals.
- We know that the single criterion [against which we measure anything nonhuman animals do] that serves as our standard, is the human parameter, i.e. the human model counts as the ideal, as the standard, for creating norms. So what happens if we put this standard of measurement into doubt?

- Biology has already determined what the identity of nonhuman animals is, and even the Animal Rights movement has satisfied itself with placing the moral question somewhere out of reach by accepting the explanation of the identity of animals as something strictly biological.

(Full text: *Moving beyond the horizon of humancentrism: What is an animal and what is a human?* <http://www.simorgh.de/objects/what-is-an-animal/> , accessed 04.12.2018)

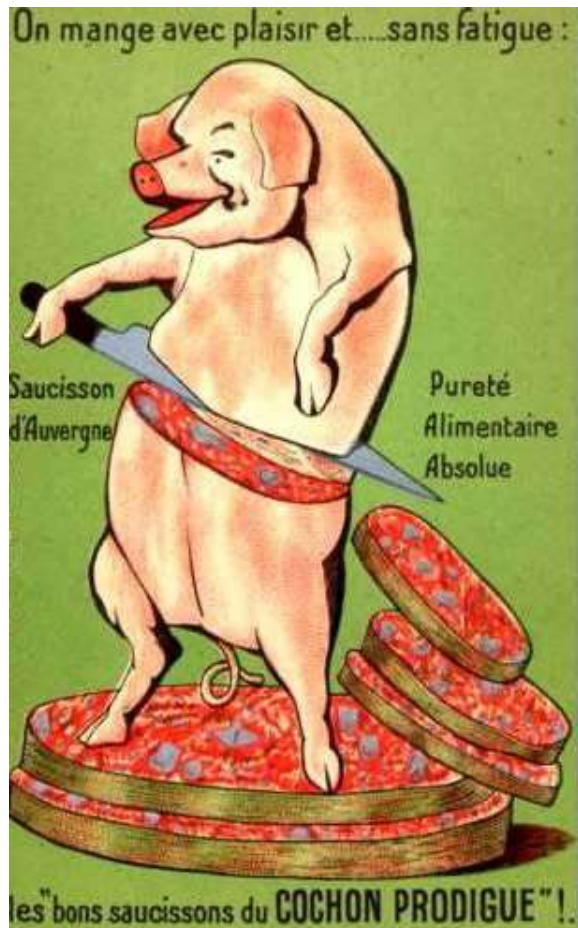


Image source: unknown.

The image is severely speciesist. I find there some discrepancies why some feminists make that comparison between the “treatment” or I guess rather the objectification of women in advertisement etc. with “meat”? There is obviously a perverted aesthetical connection thought by speciesist rhetorics, but it leads us into a direction which should be further looked at and not just taken by the superficial “meaning” of such iconography.

My thesis is that “meat” is a solely speciesist problem, unless we would speak of necrophilia and cannibalism.

B.) Feminism and Animal Rights, the one way or the other

“Meat” is not porn and it’s not “sexist” per se, it is porn insofar and forms of zoophilia are involved, direct or indirect, and sexist where sexism is directly applied to the nonhuman

animal individuals or groups *themselves*. Speaking of porn and sexism here as a proxy covers up how nonhumans are affected directly.

“Meat” is flesh, and it’s the result of a human/humans killing a nonhuman animal/animals.

We should be careful when attaching own sociological issues to Animal Rights in analogy so close to the subject of comparison, that the story lapses and gets one-sided and a important perspectives get neglected instantaneously. All Animal Rights issues need their own valid terminologies and frames of reference, otherwise we risk to blur the lines of differentiation. The analogy of sexism and speciesism fails when applied superficially and in an undifferentiated way because:

Two main points why Animal Rights issues can’t be tied to a strict feminist viewpoint, as long as feminism is used as excusing women from the ethical responsibilities in society towards their nonhuman environment.

- It’s problematic to presuppose that speciesism is something that is more prevalent in male-identified human individuals compared to female-identified human individuals.
- Also, male nonhuman animals are inasmuch sexually abused, e.g. in the farm industry (their reproductive system) such as female nonhuman animals are.
- The sociological dynamics of gender in their effect on speciesist attitudes and actions should be addressed of course, but there is no reason inherent to “biological” gender (if we would go that path) that would prove that “men” are categorically more speciesist than “women”. Also the way in which roleplay is happening in systems of oppression should be addressed, i.e. “women” taking the role of cooks, or preparing the speciesist meals, of wearing feathers and fur, etc. male roles, roles that are swapped ...

C.) Close analogies ... also of genocides and speciecides and their deficits

These types of close analogies in the field of -isms and abuse work in a valid way when we look at the psychology of the perpetrator who seeks to create a victim: the aspect of exerted violence shares many similarities, whereas however on the side of the victimized we have to see the contexts: political, enviro-political, historical, sociological, ... a group or an individual gets picked as a victim for reasons, and those exact reasons need to be analyzed under own terms, and not be conflated. In terms of speciesism, we face many forms of speciesism (i.e. religious, scientific, legal, philosophical, etc.).

D.) Feminism, Speciesism, Anthropocentrism

Random examples of female rhetorics of speciesism:

- objectification of beings oppressed, animalesque figures made with wool / felt; <https://web.archive.org/web/20160323101532/https://www.stephaniemetz.com/portfolioOverbredAnimals.html> , accessed 04.12.2018.
- helplessness and helping as an act of public viewing, <http://kathyhigh.com/project-embracing-animal.html> , accessed 04.12.2018.

- the daily randomness of the gender / nonhuman animal speciesist contexts, women taking/being part, <http://huzzahvintage.blogspot.com/2010/10/you-decide.html> , accessed 04.12.2018.
- female-identified fans, adherents, students of Hermann Nitsch for example
- female speciesist artists in general, random examples with critical comments: <http://www.farangis.de/blog/speciesism-sells-for-a-reason> , <http://www.farangis.de/blog/against-the-dignity-of-life> , <http://www.farangis.de/blog/pesi-girschs-nature-morte> , <http://www.farangis.de/blog/biologistic-arts-links> , <http://www.farangis.de/blog/reduced-to-specimen> , all accessed 04.12.2018.

Is a self-critical view on gender / being a woman / feminism necessary?

What would speak against it? We know that in our daily lives we, as “women”, make decisions that touch on core grounds that turn the private/the personal into the political (<https://userpages.umbc.edu/~korenman/wmst/pisp.html> , accessed 04.12.2018.). As antispeciesists we know with our vegan praxis just how impactful our personal choices are, and as social beings we also know how hard it can be for us to draw a line between the social expectations that one tries to fit in (in order to find a job, to be liked or accepted, to keep ones social ties or family structures/felt obligations together, and so forth) and our political ideals and ethical pressing necessities, when both might stand in conflict with each other in times of societal change. Our human social environment might be heavily speciesist and we have to get along with it, somehow yet still inspire change, for instance.

Speciesism, as remote as it seems, is to be found at the same point where *my-choice-to-decide-otherwise-or-not* crosses just any implications of socialization that I feel are ethically unjustifiable. When I rant against sexism I might as well rant against an injustice that targets nonhumans, if I am a vegan anti-speciesist minded person.

Speciesism can be understood to work socially as an ideology, where people who are convinced of their degrading stance, believe in a collectively held fiction that is assumed and agreed upon as “objectivity”, so that no rebuttal can take place on “rational grounds”.

Women do feel at home in this construct inasmuch as men do, on the large scale. Both 50 percent of humanity, male and female, believe so much in human superiority that they are willing to constitute part of a speciesist society by fulfilling their individual part in the fiction.

“Gender” defines itself from interaction within a group or society. Being oppressed as a woman doesn’t automatically mean that you can’t be oppressive towards nonhuman animals. *Drawing an analogy between sexism (or genderism) and speciesism does not take account of the different reasons and histories why the victim gets oppressed in the first place – for what ends, and how exactly. If we turn a blind eye on the gender specific functions of speciesism and anthropocentrism we might risk a loophole in our argumentation for our own rights defending nonhumans, and for integral Animal Rights themselves.*

Speciesism is a unique tragedy. The history of being classified as “animals” by humans, with all that entailed, as beings whose existence had been on earth eons before “humans” evolved,

can't be compared to any other form of oppression by a strict analogy. Being objectified as solely "animate", being slaughterable, edible, huntable, vivisectable, being objectifiable and judged as "definable" in the first place constitutes a specific situation for the affected subject, and hints at a unique technique of injustice taking place here on behalf of the oppressive side that is being applied to this particular victimized group.

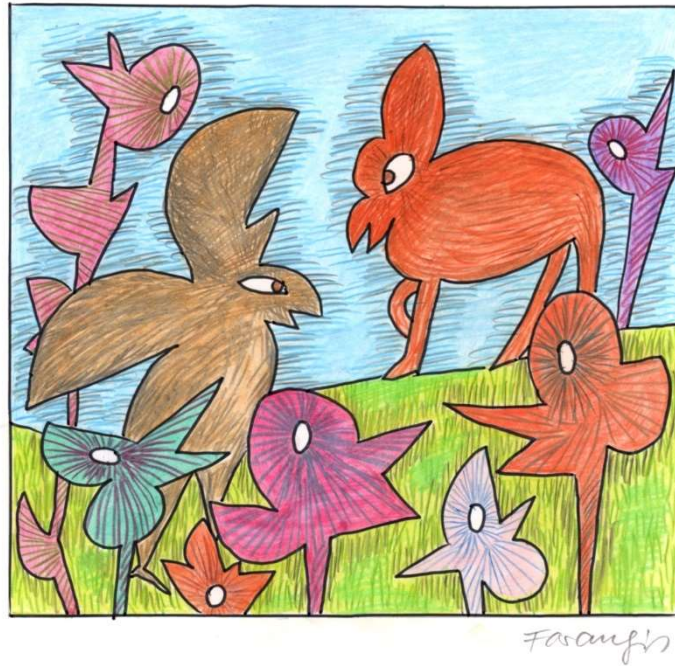
Comparisons between different forms of oppression can be extensively helpless efforts when oppressor and oppressed are as entangled as in the case of speciesist human oppressive settings.

We could straightforwardly name that *natural sciences, religion, philosophy, mass society* have to end classifying the beings we call "nonhuman animals", or we stay stuck in our psychological accomplices with the very hierarchical and oppressive systems that we criticize so vehemently as what regards our own pains. I don't see an alternative as of yet.



The ecofeminist and feminist discourse in Animal Rights and Animal Liberation (Karen Davis, Marti Kheel, Lori Gruen, Carol J. Adams, Kim Socha, Vasile Stanescu and so forth) is pluralistic enough to lead and continue their differentiated discourse I believe and I thank them for doing so.

Farangis G. Yegane. Painting: Torsi, Drawing: Werkzyklus Krone der Schöpfung, <http://crownofthecreation.farangis.de/>



Nonhuman-inclusive

The term ‘veganism’ describes the ethical and practical exclusion of any animal- and animal derived product or animal-involving procedures/exploitation utilized to serve human interests. It does not say or indicate yet how nonhuman animals should be implied actively into any framework that implies humans/human societies, as a solution to the existent predominant catastrophic human-animal relation. How nonhumans can and should be included and reached out for, be addressed, implied constructively in a way that confronts the ‘animal question’ with due justice, in other words: the state of positively dwelling together is not so much and only indirectly put forward. [1]

Similarly the term ‘speciesism’ describes the condition of ethical exclusion, now on a basically sociological level. It describes foremostly the biological categorization yet inasmuch also other forms of categorization – such as religion, philosophical, scientific, etc. – of arbitrary derogative barriers set up by humans/’human cultures and civilization’ towards nonhuman animals.

We thought now to express the direct inclusionary level by a simple term which can be used practically and applied as a scheme to test any settings, condition ... to check any given situative constellation for its *nonhuman-inclusiveness*.

This is about expressing an idea:

- For checking anything for its nonhuman-inclusiveness you logically have to open up perspectives of how your view of nonhumans can be reasonable and ethically complete, appreciative and open-minded.
- You can thus explicitly create, observe, discuss, design, conceptualize each and every aspect of human life in a nonhuman-inclusive approach.

Sounds perhaps too practical and maybe this seems to short a description of our idea, but we find it a helpful angle in our activities.

It should be added that our nonhuman-inclusive approach can be extended into a nonhuman-considerate direction where a seeming absence of nonhumans can be affirmative of nonhuman interests also indirectly, by a decided avoidance of promoting human concepts which openly or subtly suppress nonhumanity and nonhuman animals (...).

[1] This becomes clear e.g. in veganic projects, which 100 percently represent the vegan idea, yet exclude the question of animal life in a proactive form. Veganic projects don't imply space for nonhuman animals to be involved in a just yet existentially directly present way.

**If you keep relegating animality
into reductive frameworks while
doing animal advocacy work,
your activism isn't really aware of
the scopes of ethical, political,
sociological interfaces between
nature-animality-humanity ...**

Specifics of speciesism: Aesthetics

A nonhuman-inclusive critique of the view on aesthetics and speciesism on the current Animal Rights and Animal Liberation movements (fragment)

The Animal Rights discussion ends here:

The missing discussion of specifics of nonhuman oppression, in its exact manifestations as humiliation, degradation, negation, violence is currently a hinderance of further development in the political efficacy of the “Animal Rights movement”.

The discussion is omitted in sectors that deal with

interrelated oppressive systems > how is it to be specifically “food” e.g.

- in Animal Liberation, which takes biologism uncriticized (as if not posing a problem with nonhumans, only for humans, i.e. “it’s not okay to be apply biologisms to humans, but it’s a tolerable standards when applied to nonhumans”) > the entire layer of theories are not “liberated”
- in the Human-Animal-Studies sector which so far seems to a.) separate between the quality of human versus nonhuman oppression and b.) does not contextualize with environmental ethics due to a separative focus on nonhuman animals and humans > academic adherence creates sometimes insufficient epistemologies

Contextualizing animality within the widest possible fields seems to be necessary, in order to create an adequacy in perspective on sociological, ecological, philosophical e.g. parameters and qualificators of the nonhuman situation as faced with speciesist oppression.

Specifics of oppression in speciesism: I am taking aesthetics first, as this is the most overlooked field of problem within the Animal Rights movement considering the powerfulness aesthetics hold in human societies and the specifics of speciesism and aesthetics as an oppressive tool.

Aesthetics in arts is one way in which animal degradation takes form. In which ways does this occur?

- The exact ‘specialty’ of speciesist and/or nonhuman derogative aesthetics can be observed.

What makes up aesthetics in its cultural function overall. The central roles have to be considered which wilfulness (Willkür), taste/preference (Geschmack, Präferenz), mode (Machart), subjectiveness, play.

Nonhuman-inclusiveness

“Thinking experiences” (Denkerfahrungen) of nonhumanity must be taken into account > multiplication with the perspectives of nonhuman friends on the basis of e.g. the shared fact of individual existence and individuality (singular experience fact) – letting difference be and don’t require sameness (this is my postulation), yet locate “life” in “one world” (...).

If we exclude nonhumanness again from all possibilities of angles of narration and narrative, we keep on repeating and perpetuating the initial species-denouncing act.



Specifics of speciesism: History, how we see “the past” and how we preserve “what is important”

Our collectively built historical consciousness, the legacies nonhuman-ignorant-communities and -collectives value:

We relegate nonhuman animal history and nonhuman history in general into the natural-historic chapter of (basically) human history.

We ignore nonhuman narratives; we ignore positions outside the anthropocentric dogma when they come from nonhuman perspectives, we haven't developed any comprehension for nonhumanity on non-speciesist levels.

If we chose a nonhuman-inclusive mode of perception and developed accesses to nonhuman notions of 'being-in-time and socio-cultural-contexts' in their terms (...), we'd be able to phrase nonhuman perspectivity in our words, without referring to biology or other reductive explanatory segments into which animality has continuously been relegated.

Collective memories

Museums, when they are about culture, thought, introspection, mental “wealth”, aesthetics: nonhumans are at best a means-to-an-end within these contexts, they are never represented as standing for their own complexity in broader nonhuman-inclusive historical contexts.

History in itself is seen as a concept and experienced-phenomenon only conceivable by humans, and amongst humans themselves history is being selectively purported.

Memories of nonhumanity, from their and from nonhuman inclusive perspectivities, are being nullified, consciously conceived as irrelevant and mentally archived within any of the manifold speciesist categories of human- or rather humanitycentered perceptions.



Specifics of speciesism: Physis and visible presence

- The differing, specific physicalness of a nonhuman animal is the criterion upon which humans base their argumentation of proof: that a nonhuman animal cannot physically reason to a more complex content than the limit and quality of capacity that humans ascribe to them.

- The biological markers become an absolute-instance-of-ability in context with quality of existence and existential meaning.
- The state of being a nonhuman animal in itself becomes thus supposedly fully explicable, the constructed explicability is so far never taken out of the human-defined context, not even by their defenders.
- Only in mythological and ancient human folklore we find traces of different ascriptions to nonhuman animal physicality (partly also in childrens literature and modern folklore, but to a more humancentric extent).
- The big religious belief systems built their image of the human and god on an equal plane and set that as a standard criterion for leading a qualified reasonable life separate from the state of nature; nonhumans had been even in ancient philosophies seen as the same as 'brute nature' – based on their physical difference and uniqueness/specialness.
- Even today the comparison between "humanness" and "animalness" is being sought in favor of humans as the quality marker for reason and ethics, ethics, morals, reasoning, love, relations, socialness, etc. it is not fundamentally sought in different nonhuman cultures – most prominently language and philosophy are seen as bound to the physis of the human, not the nonhuman, whereas wisdom is sought in "nature" to a huge but yet unclear and unexplained extent in humanity.
- The natural sciences were "the tool of choice" when "humanity" dealt with the "knowledge" of bodies of animality *to draw separations*, thus Galen and later Descartes famously vivisected while basing their thought and observations on a mixture between religion and 'natural sciences' ... Natural sciences only emboldened that certain physics are bound to certain existential qualities, *which the human will define and 'prove'*.
- A separationist culture is being created in human social life, where humanity and animality and nonhuman life is finely segregated, basically and basically philosophically, so that people don't even think and see anymore, but solely follow the total norm.
- Sadism, violence to the physis of nonhumanity is the warning shot, the societal execution, the harshest separator that keeps humanity an wanted and unwanted enemy to animality (as operating with fear i.e. 'speciesist totalitarian structures').

Seeing big birds



Big bird cartoon by Ken Eaton

The family of the big walking birds, like the Moas (extinct), Nandus, Emus, Ostriches, Elephant Birds (*Aepyornis maximus*, extinct). They tend to be seen only in regards to their being different than the “typical” flying birds, and their size is often highlighted as if they had something absurd about them.



Table I.

We attribute certain animals to certain stances that we have towards them; each species, each subspecies, has a certain box that a “human cultural context” holds ready for them.

We lack the ethical barrier, the healthy taboo, to understand that nonhumans are not to be threatened, ridiculed, hated, and relegated into irrelevancy, if we want to have a comprehensive ethical outlook on the world; the kind of taboos we have learned and are constantly in a process of learning when we face each other.



Stiftung
Preussischer Kulturbesitz
Pallmann, Hundsköpfige, Kopflose, Einäugige, Fußschatner (Herodot), Ident. Nr.: VIII A
1907
© Foto: Ethnologisches Museum, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin

Table II.

Seeing nonhuman animals of today, we tend to relate them to their ancestors in a fascinated yet freak-show-like way: we look how they compare in sizes, who ate who, and why these ancestors wouldn't “survive” or evolved, we say they look or looked “weird” or awesome.



Table III.

In past cultures and civilizations nonhumans were perceived with myth. Now, even extinct and ancient animals that we have never seen in real life, are placed by us into this taboo-free-zone, where we view the past in ways that reinforce our current objectifying speciesist attitudes.

Images:

Table I.:

“Bones from the moa – a large, flightless and extinct New Zealand bird – were collected from the early 19th century. Public servant and naturalist Walter Mantell was an important collector of moa bones. He sent large collections to Richard Owen of the British Museum, who was the first scientist to identify moa species. Here, Mantell is fancifully depicted perched on a partly skeletal moa. The document under his arm refers to his government work setting aside land reserves for Māori.”

<http://www.teara.govt.nz/en/artwork/37312/walter-mantell-riding-a-moa> , accessed 20.03.2014.

Table II.:

Hundsköpfige, Kopflose, Einäugige, Fußschattner (Herodot), Ident.Nr. VIII A 1607. Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Ethnologisches Museum.

<http://www.smb-digital.de/eMuseumPlus?service=ExternalInterface&module=collection&objectId=617600> , accessed 20.03.2014.

Table III.:

“A rock painting that appears to be of a bird that went extinct about 40,000 years ago has been discovered in northern Australia. If confirmed, this would be the oldest rock art anywhere in the world, pre-dating the famous Chauvet cave in southern France by some 7,000 years.”

<http://www.australiangeographic.com.au/news/2010/06/bird-rock-art-could-be-worlds-oldest/> , accessed 20.03.2014.



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